Parent – Student Handbook 2026 – 2027

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July 2026

Dear Parents and Students of St. Thomas the Apostle School,

Welcome to a new year filled with great promise and wonderful possibilities!

The purpose of this handbook is to inform you of the policies and regulations that we follow on a daily basis in order to ensure a safe and positive learning environment for each student. This handbook is a guide consisting of school policies that are in place and followed throughout the duration of a school day, including extended day programs. I ask that you thoroughly read this handbook and become familiar with our policies and regulations. Most importantly, please discuss the contents of this handbook with your child/children.

After reviewing the handbook, it is required that you return the signed form to the school office. This form will be kept on file for the remainder of the school year. I kindly ask that signed forms be returned no later than September 18, 2026.

I thank you in advance for your cooperation and look forward to working with you as we build a partnership in the spiritual and academic growth of your child/children. Together, we can continue and build upon the legacy of the Sisters of St. Joseph who served St. Thomas the Apostle School from 1932 until 2024. Our school's mission remains the same and we look forward to a bright future filled with great promise!

Sincerely,
Ms. Beth Hawley, Principal

MISSION

The Mission of St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School community is to nurture each child from preschool to grade eight in a peaceful, faith centered learning environment with a foundation in gospel values. Academic excellence, character development, and commitment to service challenge students to reach their full potential in an ever changing world.

STUDENT PLEDGE

At St. Thomas the Apostle School,
I have the responsibility to learn, serve, lead and succeed.
I will be kind and respectful.
I will be a peacemaker by my words and my actions.
Today, I will make a difference.

PARENT'S PRAYER

God, Great Parent of all people, help me in my task of parenthood.
Help me to see my children's problems through their eyes.
Keep ever before me my own childhood so that I will not expect too much.
Send your Holy Spirit that I may receive the graces I need.
Give me the patience of the silent stars.
Give me a sense of humor.
Help me to teach them to play the game according to the rules.
Help me to live my own life above doubt and skepticism.
Help me to radiate faith in the basic goodness of life.
Help me to keep the ideals of youth aglow in my own life.
Help me to teach them to live bravely and to meet defeat courageously.
Help me to teach them that the value of their lives will be measured by the service they give.
Help me to teach them that true happiness is found, not in things, but in the unfolding of their minds and their souls.
I ask this through Your Son, Jesus. Amen.

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2026-2027 SCHOOL POLICIES

ADMISSION OF STUDENTS

Every child is welcome at St. Thomas the Apostle School on a space available basis. An application and interview are part of the admission process.

EXTENDED CARE PROGRAMS

The before and after school/extended care program is offered to students in preschool-grade 8 on school days, including early release day for conferences in October, and delayed opening days. Registration in both programs is necessary and specifics regarding times, fees and space availability are issued each school year.

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

The possession, sale, or use of alcohol, drugs, or any other controlled substances, including vaporized nicotine products on the school grounds or buses is strictly forbidden. Violation of this rule will result in immediate suspension and/or possible expulsion and will be reported to appropriate law enforcement agencies. In accordance with Massachusetts State Law, smoking on school grounds is always prohibited by all persons.

ARRIVAL DROP-OFF / DISMISSAL PICK-UP / EARLY DISMISSAL

STUDENT ARRIVAL DROP-OFF PROCEDURE

Student drop-off is NOT permitted on Pine Street.

PRESCHOOL ARRIVAL Preschool students may be dropped off at 7:20 if registered in the before school program. Drop off for the early arrival is in the Club Room. Regular drop-off time is 8am and parents will enter the back parking lot from Kings Highway.

KINDERGARTEN-GRADE 8 ARRIVAL

Students should not arrive at school until 7:20, unless registered in the before school program. School staff will be in the parking lot at 7:20 directing you as you drop off your child. Enter the parking lot from Westfield Street (use entrance directly across from the funeral home) and swing to the right. Do not pull in front of the buses. Wait in line behind the buses until they leave. Students will exit buses and cars at the gym doors and go directly into school to receive their breakfast. Parents are not allowed to walk their children to their classrooms. When leaving the parking lot, form two lanes (left lane to turn left, right lane to turn right) and use the exit to the right on Westfield Street.

LATE ARRIVAL All students in kindergarten-grade 8 who arrive late to school must enter at the office doors. Preschoolers in the 3-yr-old program who are late must also enter at the main office doors. Preschoolers in the 3-4 and 4-yr-old programs who are late must enter at the preschool entrance door. Please park in the back of the school and walk to the preschool entrance (using the ramp) with your child.

DELAYED OPENING When there is a delayed opening, St. Thomas preschool is in session at the time of the opening of school for elementary/middle school students. Only those students who are registered in the before school program may be dropped off at the usual 6:50 time.

STUDENT DISMISSAL PICK-UP PROCEDURE

Student pick-up is NOT permitted on Pine Street.

K-8 DISMISSAL – to include preschool students being dismissed with older siblings
School dismissal begins at 1:45. Only parents and those authorized by a parent may pick-up a child at dismissal. A release authorization form must be filled out and will be kept on file at school. If someone other than the regular authorized person is picking up a child, a note must be written to the teacher or a phone call must be placed to the school office with said person's name. This person must bring an ID to show the teacher before the child will be released to them.

Students riding the school buses will be dismissed first. Under no circumstances is a child to be removed from the bus line. Cars should be parked in the open area away from the buses. Please remain in your car until the buses have left to greet your child. Once the buses have exited the parking lot, students on car line will be dismissed. Students will be released to an authorized person and proceed to their vehicle. **For the safety of everyone, please do not move your vehicle until all children are in the care of an adult.**

Any student requiring an early dismissal should have a note written by his/her guardian. If a sudden change in plans occurs during the day, please call the school and we will notify the teacher and your child. **Due to the high volume of calls received at the office throughout the day, we ask that notes be written.** Guardians/authorized persons must report to the office to pick up children who are leaving early.

PRESCHOOL DISMISSAL
Half Day Preschool Students Dismissal-11:30 Children will be dismissed at 11:30 from the gym doors in the main parking lot.
Full Day Preschool Students Dismissal-2:00 Children will be dismissed at 2:00 to the driveway of the school on Kings Highway. Please wait in your car and we will bring your child to you. If your preschooler has older siblings, your child will be brought to their classroom to be dismissed at 1:45.

EARLY DISMISSAL DAYS FOR ALL STUDENTS
Students in K-8 and preschool children being dismissed with older siblings will be dismissed at 10:00 to the main parking lot. All other preschool students will be dismissed at 10:15 to the driveway of the school on Kings Highway.

ATTENDANCE

If a student is absent, a parent must call the school office by 9:00. Chronic absenteeism/tardiness creates a genuine hardship for a student and is regarded as a very serious problem. The following circumstances are the only recognized excuses for school absence: personal illness, serious family illness, and death in the family. If an absence is excused, homework and missed classwork are available for pickup at the office on the second day of student's absence due to these circumstances. An unexcused absence occurs when a student is absent for reasons other than those listed above. In the case of unexcused absences, it is the teacher's discretion as to whether missing work is given to complete.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to schedule vacations on the regularly scheduled vacation dates. **In the event of unscheduled school vacations, students may not receive work in advance.** Parents must assume the educational responsibility of their child/children should they choose to take their child/children out of school during required times.

Parents/guardians are to make every effort to schedule doctor, dentist, and other appointments outside of school hours. To be considered present for the day, a student must be in school for a minimum of 50% of the academic day. Students may not be brought to school after 11am. Students absent from school may not attend any club and/or school activity on the same day of the absence. Students who are absent for more than two days are required to bring a doctor's note to school.

Chronic absenteeism (18 or more days in the school year) may jeopardize promotion to the next grade. Every student who must be absent from school for one or more days is expected to fulfill the academic assignments given during the excused absence. Students will be given the same number of days to make up work, quizzes, and/or tests as the number of days they were absent. Students who are absent due to prolonged illnesses will be given extended periods to complete assignments as current assignments will need to be adhered to. The length of the extension will be at the discretion of the teacher.

TARDINESS

Every effort should be made for all students to be on time to start the day with their classmates at 7:35. It is important to the learning process and to the student's self-esteem to arrive at school on time. A student who is tardy to class not only places his/her own learning in jeopardy, but also interrupts the teacher and the learning of other students.

BOOK BAGS/BACK PACKS

Book bags/backpacks must be used to carry all schoolbooks to and from school.
Please label with child's name. Backpacks with wheels are not allowed. Chromebooks must always be transported in the carrying case provided by the school.

BULLYING

Bullying, in any form, including cyber-bullying using technology or any electronic means such as social media services, will not be tolerated. According to Massachusetts state law, "Bullying is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at the Target that:

- Causes physical or emotional harm to the Target or damage to the Target's property.
- Places the Target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself, or of damage to his/her property.
- Creates a hostile environment at school for the Target.
- Infringes on the rights of the Target at school.
- Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school."

Engagement in online blogs, such as but not limited to Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, Discord etc. may result in disciplinary actions if the content of the student's blog includes defamatory or threatening comments regarding the school, the faculty, other students or the parish. "Cyber-Bullying means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by:

- Wire
- Radio
- Electromagnetics https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-law-about-bullying-and-cyberbullying
- Photo-electronic or photo-optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications.

Students are strongly encouraged to report all instances of bullying immediately to a teacher, parent, and/or administrator. Instances of bullying will be addressed and may result in an in-school or home suspension and in extreme cases, expulsion. Age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade is incorporated into the curriculum using a variety of programs.

St. Thomas the Apostle School strictly adheres to the guidelines and directives put forth in the Massachusetts Bullying Law and Diocesan School anti-bullying policies.

BUS CONDUCT

School bus transportation is available for West Springfield students that live a certain distance from the school. The schedule, routes, times and rules are determined by the West Springfield School Department and the bus company employed by the town. Bus stops and time of pick up is published in the West Springfield Record in August. Pupil behavior on the school bus should always be exemplary. The following rules of behavior have been established to ensure the safety of all students who ride buses.

1. Use only the bus and bus stops assigned, unless a note is sent from home to the office. A bus pass from the office will be given to the bus driver.
2. Orderly behavior is required at the bus stop.
3. Follow directions of the bus driver.
4. Remain seated, facing forward when the bus is in motion. Remain seated when the bus is in the parking lot until the bus driver opens the doors to exit the bus.
5. Keep the aisles clear.
6. Use quiet voices.
7. Enter and leave the bus in an orderly manner.
8. Keep head and arms inside the bus.
9. Do not throw anything out the window.

Infractions of the above rules will be brought to the attention of parents. Continual abuse of bus privileges will result in denial of bus transportation.

CAFETERIA RULES

St. Thomas the Apostle School students can receive free breakfast and lunch each day that school is in session (excluding lunch on early release days). St. Thomas is a nut free school, with no exceptions. The same rules for behavior apply in the cafeteria and club room as in the classroom. Students should remain seated until instructed by the teacher in charge to go to the playground. Students are expected to leave their places clean and in good order. Misconduct could result in the loss of cafeteria privileges.

CALENDAR FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR

St. Thomas School follows the West Springfield Public School calendar with the exception of some early dismissal and no school days. A copy of our school calendar is sent home with each child. You can also find the school calendar on our website at www.stthomasapostleschool.org and on the FACTS Family Portal.

CELL PHONES/ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Cell phones may not be used during school hours including the Extended Care Programs. If a student must have a cell phone, then it must be kept in their backpack and the cell phone must be turned to the "off" position for the day. If a student needs to make a phone call, they may ask to use the school office phone.

All electronic devices such as but not limited to: cell phones, IPods, Apple Watches or any other smart watch, and MP3 players or any device with head phones **are not permitted** in school, including the Extended Care Program.

If a student fails to comply with this policy, the device will be confiscated and sent to the office. A parent must retrieve the device. If the problem persists, further disciplinary action will be taken by the administration.

The St. Thomas the Apostle School administration reserves the right to search any and all electronic devices brought into the school.

Electronic Reading Devices: Kindles, Nooks and other electronic reading devices may be used by grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 for READING ONLY. Students may not use these devices to access the internet at any time during the school day or at the Extended Care Programs. **The school is NOT responsible for a student's lost, misplaced, stolen or broken portable communication and/or electronic devices on school property, including the school bus.**

CHANGE OF ADDRESS AND CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

It is very important that every student has an up-to-date address and telephone record at the school office. Notify the school office immediately if there is a change of address or phone number.

STUDENT COUNCIL, CLUBS AND AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Student Council, clubs and after school activities are offered at various times during the year, on an age-appropriate level. Club offerings as well as club dates are sent home with a registration form. In some cases, fees may be assessed. Students accepted onto the Student Council or into club offerings must remain in good academic and conduct standing in all classes. Students may be removed from Student Council or a club should their academic or conduct status fall below the accepted level. Any student removed from Student Council or a club may not re-join in the same academic year.

COMMUNICATIONS

A packet containing information of interest to students and parents will be distribued the first week of school. Weekly updates containing important school information and events are emailed by the principal on the day before the beginning of a new week. For important announcements and school closings, families will receive information through our FACTS Parent/Guardian Alert system. Please call the school office if any contact information changes for either parent/guardian.

CORI CHECK AND VIRTUS ONLINE TRAINING

It is a requirement of the Diocese of Springfield that all parents/guardians who wish to volunteer at school or chaperone field trips must undergo a CORI check as provided by the Criminal History Systems Board and complete the Virtus Online Training. Once completed, the CORI check is good for three years. This must be done regardless of previous CORI checks by other organizations other than St. Thomas School and St. Thomas Parish.

CUSTODY AGREEMENTS

The school office should be notified in writing of custody agreements especially when changes are made. If a court order is involved, a copy must be sent to the school office.

DENTAL AND DOCTOR APPOINTMENTS

An effort should be made to schedule dental and doctor appointments outside school hours. If this is not possible, a written note should be sent to the school office. When possible, the child should return to school rather than miss an entire day. Students must be in school for 50% of the day to be considered present for the day. Students may not arrive at school for the day after 11am.

DISCIPLINE/SCHOOL CONDUCT

Behavior expected from St. Thomas the Apostle School students is a combination of common courtesy, respect of self and others, and self -discipline. The following types of conduct are never permitted at St. Thomas:

1. Bullying
2. Cheating
3. Fighting
4. Use of profanity
5. Stealing
6. Defiance of school staff
7. Possession of weapons or other dangerous objects
8. Possession or use of any controlled substance
9. Vandalism
10. Inappropriate use of the bathroom facilities

Teachers have the authority and responsibility to maintain discipline in their classroom as well as on school grounds and at school functions. When there is a problem, the teacher may: use classroom disciplinary procedures, conference with the student, conference with the parent/guardian, or refer the situation to the building principal. School discipline policies are consistently enforced. If there is an incident at school, parents are encouraged to request an appointment with the teacher. Evidence of mutual respect between parents, teachers, and administration will model good behavior and mature relationships. The administration reserves the right to determine the appropriateness of any disciplinary action that needs to be taken. The administration also reserves the right to search all lockers, desks, and anything that is brought into school including cell phones or other electronic devices.

DRESS CODE

School Uniform/Physical Education Uniform/Dress Down Day/Student Appearance

Students at St. Thomas the Apostle School are required to wear uniforms and follow student appearance guidelines. It is the responsibility of the parent as well as the child/children to attend school each day following the uniform and student appearance guidelines. **School uniforms will be supplied by Blake's Uniform Store located on Parker Street in Springfield. School uniforms must be purchased from this company to insure uniformity in style and in color.** On Wednesdays, students may wear school "spirt wear" tops purchased at www.sideline.bsnsports.com.

Preschool Dress Code

Preschool children are not required to wear a school uniform. Clothing should be comfortable and allow for freedom of movement.

- sneakers and shoes (with socks) with a rubber soles ONLY should be worn
- **NO sandals, open toe shoes, Crocks or flip flops are allowed for safety reasons**

GIRLS

Girls Grades K-4

- plaid jumper
- navy blue skort
- navy blue or khaki dress uniform slacks, with belts
- navy blue or khaki walking shorts, with belts, until November 1 and after April 1
- white, light blue or yellow blouse with Peter Pan collar to be worn with jumpers
- red, or navy blue polo shirts with school logo to be worn with skorts
- white or navy blue knee socks or tights – ankle socks, including no-show socks may be worn May 1
- No boots or slippers/moccasins can be worn in school
- shoes or sneakers of any color may be worn

Girls Grades 5-8

NAVY BLUE OR RED - LONG OR SHORT SLEEVED POLO SHIRTS WITH SCHOOL LOGO MAY PURCHASED AT BLAKE'S SCHOOL UNIFORM STORE

- plaid skirt
- navy blue skort
- navy blue or khaki dress uniform slacks, with belts
- navy blue or khaki walking shorts, with belts until November 1 and after April 1
- white or navy blue knee socks or tights – ankle socks, including no-show socks may be worn April 1
- No boots or slippers/moccasins can be worn in school
- shoes or sneakers of any color may be worn

BOYS

Boys Grades K-8

NAVY BLUE OR RED - LONG OR SHORT SLEEVED POLO SHIRTS WITH SCHOOL LOGO MAY BE PURCHASED AT BLAKE'S SCHOOL UNIFORM STORE

- navy blue or khaki dress uniform slacks with belts
- navy blue or khaki walking shorts with belts until November 1 and after April 1
- white or navy crew socks
- no boots or slippers/moccasins can be worn in school
- shoes or sneakers of any color may be worn

(Dress Code Cont.)

Optional Clothing for the Classroom

K-8- navy blue sweatshirts or hoodies with school logo (purchased at school)

- navy blue or red fleece vest (purchased from uniform store)
- plain navy blue cardigan sweaters (purchased from uniform store)
- "spirit wear" tops on Wednesdays purchased at www.sideline.bsnsports.com

St. Thomas School hoodies, sweatshirts, and gym uniforms may be purchased at the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION UNIFORM DRESS CODE

Each student is required to wear the established gym uniform for physical education class. This is required of all students in grades kindergarten through eight. Gym shirts, shorts and sweatshirts must be purchased at school. Navy blue sweatpants may be worn during cooler/cold months. Leggings/yoga pants are not part of the gym uniform.

STUDENT APPEARANCE GUIDELINES

- Good student hygiene is always expected.
- Single stud earrings are allowed; no hoops or dangles (for safety purposes).
- Finger nails may not exceed ¼ inch.
- No student is permitted to put any tattoos (permanent or temporary) on his/her body.
- Hair styles are expected to be appropriate for school.
- Hair should be away from the face and not cover eyes at any time.
- Students are not permitted to have unnatural colored or dyed hair.

DRESS CODE for DRESS DOWN DAYS

On a dress down day, as designated by the school or student birthday, an appropriate casual top is allowed.

SPECIAL OCCASION DRESS DOWN DAYS

On special occasions, the administration may grant a "full" dress down day:

-leggings/yoga pants may be worn if a shirt reaches below the backside of the student
- no hats indoors
-shorts must be no more than 3 inches above the knee
- no shirts with inappropriate words
- no tank tops
- no boots, slippers/moccasins
- no flip flops or open toe shoes

The administration reserves the right to decide what is appropriate and acceptable. Parents will be notified if a student does meet the school's appearance guidelines or does not adhere to the uniform or dress down policy.

EMERGENCY CRISIS PLAN/SCHOOL EVACUATION

An emergency crisis plan is in place. This plan provides for emergency evacuation to Mittineague School or Grace Lutheran Church if necessary. Lockdowns, fire drills, evacuation, and tornado procedures are practiced throughout the school year. In case of a true evacuation, parents will be notified using our Parent/Guardian Alert phone system or town officials. Parents will be told to follow the prescribed reunification plan or procedure by town officials.

EMERGENCY DRILLS

Emergency drills are conducted throughout the school year. Fire drill routes are posted in each classroom. Each class has an escape route to an outside area, a safe distance from the building. Lockdown, tornado and evacuation procedures are also reviewed and practiced throughout the year.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

In case of emergency, each student is required to have on file at the school office the following information:

1. Parent/guardian name(s).
2. Complete and up-to-date address.
3. Home phone and parent/guardian work phone and cellular phone numbers.
4. Emergency phone number of friend or relative.
5. Physician's name and phone number.
6. Medical alert information.

School closings or delays are determined by the West Springfield School Department. Parents will receive a Parent/Guardian Alert message but are also advised to listen to local television or radio stations for this information. Please follow the West Springfield Public School listing. If an emergency warrants an early school closing, children should be prepared with an emergency plan such as a relative or neighbor's house to go to should no one be at home. In addition to the above, the school will employ its Parent/Guardian Alert system notifying you of such instances.

GUM CHEWING

Gum chewing is prohibited in the building and on school grounds.

HOMEWORK

Homework is an extension of the learning that takes place in school and provides practice and drills reinforcing classroom learning. Parents can help their children by ensuring a comfortable place for the students to work, by seeing to it that the assignments given in school are completed, and by checking their planners at regular intervals. Beginning in kindergarten, homework is assigned at regular intervals. Students are responsible for completing homework neatly and punctually according to the instructions given by the teacher. Generally, grades 1 and 2 will receive approximately 10 to 20 minutes per day, grades 3 and 4, 30 to 40 minutes, grades 5 and 6, 50 to 60 minutes, and 7 and 8, 70 to 90 minutes per day. Homework and missed classwork is available for pickup at the office on the second day of a student's excused absence.

HONOR ROLL

The honor roll is a special recognition for academic achievement in grades 6-8.
The honor roll criteria is as follows:

High Honors:

In all honor roll subjects student must have the following:
Grades – All A's
Work Habits – E-Exemplary, VG-Very Good, S-Satisfactory
Conduct – E-Exemplary, VG-Very Good, S-Satisfactory

Honors:

In all honor roll subjects student must have the following:
Grades – 5 A's 3B's
Work Habits – E-Exemplary, VG-Very Good, S-Satisfactory
Conduct – E-Exemplary, VG-Very Good, S-Satisfactory
The honor roll applies to the graded subjects - Religion, English/Language Arts, Reading/Literature, Spelling, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.
A Conduct or Work Habits grade of N-Needs Improvement or U-Unsatisfactory in any subject to include-Art, Spanish and Physical Education will make the student ineligible for the honor roll. An N or a U in Handwriting will not disqualify students from the honor roll.

ID BADGES

Visitors will sign in at the office and receive a visitor's ID badge upon entering the school. Chaperones will wear a school ID badge when accompanying students on field trips.

ILLNESS AND INJURY

In case of illness or injury, a child will be cared for by a member of the school staff. First aid treatment will be rendered. If emergency treatment is necessary, parents will be contacted. If a parent cannot be reached and the situation so warrants, 911 will be called and the child will be taken to an emergency room accompanied by the principal, school nurse or teacher. An emergency number where parents can be reached must be on file at the school. Be sure to send updated contact numbers to the office.
When returning to physical education class and recess after an injury or prolonged illness, students must have a doctor or parent's note releasing them to participate. For their own protection, students are not permitted to participate in physical education or recess while wearing a cast.
Students who have been sick should not return until they are well and without fever for at least 24 hours.

IMMUNIZATIONS AND VACCINATIONS

Massachusetts School Immunization Law requires that every child admitted to school must meet certain immunization requirements. Parents are notified of these requirements as the child enters preschool or any other grade. These records are kept in the school nurse's office.

LEAVING SCHOOL GROUNDS

Students are not allowed to leave the school grounds during school hours for any reason without the knowledge and consent of the administration. Permission to leave the school grounds will be granted only upon written request from the student's parent or guardian.

LIBRARY

The library is opened on a regularly scheduled basis and is supervised 2 days a week by the librarian. Library classes are held for grades preschool-grade 5. They are held for the purpose of library instruction as well as for the enjoyment of the materials and books. Students are allowed to use the library with permission from their classroom teacher. They may use the library to read, check out books, return books, do reference work or work on special projects. A replacement fee will be charged to the student for lost or damaged books. The library collection is constantly updated and expanded. Books are chosen for either their educational or recreational value.

LITTERING

St. Thomas the Apostle School takes pride in its building and grounds. Students are expected to be similarly proud and to refrain from littering.

LOST AND FOUND

All clothing found on the campus is placed in a lost and found area in the hallway of the main building. Money, jewelry or any other articles of value are brought to the office. Students can claim them after proper identification.

MAKE UP WORK

It is the student's responsibility to make up work for excused absences. When a student is absent from school, homework is available for pickup at the office on the second day of absence. All make up work should be completed within the same amount of time that the student has missed.

MEDICATION AND HEALTH POLICY

If a student must take medication at school, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health regulations must be followed.
The regulations are:
Prescription Medications: The following forms must be on file in school before medication can be administered at school. Forms may be obtained at school or at the doctor's office.
1.Signed consent by parent/guardian to give medicine.
2.Signed medication order by physician and parent.
Medications must be delivered to school in a pharmacy or manufacturer-labeled container by a parent/guardian.
Non-prescription Medications:
1.Must be in the original container (aspirin bottle, cough medicine bottle, etc.)
2.A note, dated and signed from the parent must accompany the medication.
Information in the note should include clear dosage instructions, when last dose was given at home, what other medications child is taking at home, and history of any allergies. Students are not permitted to be in possession of medication at any time.
Health Policy Regarding Lice:
3. If nits or lice are found on a child, the parent must contact a pediatrician immediately for proper treatment. The school must also be notified. All reported cases will be kept confidential. A child cannot return to school until he/she is nit free and proper treatment has been given.

NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY

St. Thomas the Apostle School admits students of any race, color, national and/or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. The school does not discriminate based on race, color, national/and or ethnic origin in administration of educational policies, admission policies, athletic, and other school-administered programs.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent-Teacher conferences occur in the fall. Parents will be contacted by the homeroom teachers to schedule an appointment for each child; however, it is not necessary to wait for the regular conference time if a parent has a special concern. Parent conferences are encouraged and can be arranged with the classroom teacher at any time during the school year. **All conferences should be scheduled between the teacher and parent and should not be conducted without an appointment.**

PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION (PTO)

The PTO exists to provide a channel of communication between parents, teachers and the administration of St. Thomas the Apostle School to promote the general well-being of the students. The specific goals of this organization are:

- to raise the necessary funds to provide for additional educational opportunities for the students
- to provide opportunities for all concerned individuals to come in contact with ideas which will promote the educational, moral, and spiritual development of the student at home and at school
- to direct and coordinate parental support to the school through assistance activities, social functions, and fundraiser

All parents are encouraged to become members and to actively participate. A list of meeting dates and times is given out in September.

PEANUT AND NUT FREE POLICY

Peanut butter and products containing nuts or any nut products **may not be brought to school.** This policy is meant to protect our children.

PLAYGROUND RULES

Students are to remain on the blacktop area or on the playing field during recess/lunch period. Students are expected to behave in an acceptable manner. Dangerous activities, misuse or destruction of playground equipment will not be permitted. Teachers are on duty at recess/lunch times.

PLAYSCAPE

This is a secured area with playground equipment open to our students in the preschool and younger grades. Teachers are on duty at all times during student use of the playscape.

PROMOTION AND RETENTION

Advancement to the next grade at St. Thomas the Apostle School is based on a student's attendance, classroom performance, test results, and recommendations of teachers. Promotion to the next grade depends on successful completion of all subject areas. The administration may recommend the repetition of a grade, tutoring, or summer school classes as requirement for promotion when, after conferences with teachers and parents, it is believed that such action will better prepare the student academically or emotionally for the next grade.

REPORT CARDS

Report cards are issued quarterly following the completion of each 10-week grading period for grades K-8. Preschool students will receive progress reports twice a year.

RESPECT FOR TEACHERS AND STAFF MEMBERS

Parents are held to the same standard as students regarding respect for administrators, teachers and school staff members. Enrollment of the child in the school implies a partnership between the school and the parents/guardian/child. If the partnership breaks down, parents may be asked to withdraw the child from the school.

RIGHT TO SEARCH

The administration reserves the right to search all backpacks, lockers, desks and anything that is brought into school including cell phone or other electronic devices.

SCHOOL BOARD

St. Thomas the Apostle School Board is established to assist the principal and, ultimately, the pastor, by providing advice and counsel particularly in the following areas:

1. Strategic planning
    - to assist in formulating strategic goals for the long-term direction of the school
    - to assist in formulating the school mission statement
2. Policy formulation
    - to provide advice and counsel regarding policies in areas determined by the pastor and principal
3. Evaluation of policies, plans, mission effectiveness and board self-evaluation
4. Institutional advancement/development
    - to provide advice and counsel regarding the programs of institutional advancement and to enhance the image, enrollment and financial viability of the school
5. Financial planning and financial management
    - to provide advice and counsel regarding long-range financial planning, annual budget development, budget monitoring and financial reporting
6. Communications
    - to provide advice and counsel regarding communicating school policies and activities to the various school constituencies

The school board has no authority for formulating policies separate from the pastor and principal. The board has no responsibility for determining the amount of parish funds in support of the school and has no responsibility regarding school curriculum, staff/personnel or students.

SKATEBOARDS/ROLLERBLADES/BICYCLES

Students are not permitted to ride bicycles, skateboards or rollerblades to or from school.

SMOKING and VAPING

As a smoke free facility according to diocesan regulation and state law, smoking/vaping is strictly forbidden in, on, or around school property.

SPECIAL SERVICES

A quality education is provided for all students at St. Thomas the Apostle School. Sometimes a student may experience some difficulty in understanding a particular concept. Each teacher in grades kindergarten – grade 8 has a day to stay after school for extra help each week.
At times, a student may be referred for assistance during the school day from the remedial teacher. Remedial assistance is offered in reading for grades 1-3 and in some instances, other grades as well. Remedial assistance will be offered in math for students in grades 2-5 and in some instances, other grades as well.
The student's hometown usually provides testing for speech, language, math and reading areas. After consultation between the teacher and the parent, the parent would contact their town regarding a student being evaluated.

STUDY SKILLS

Parents are encouraged to help their child be aware of skills and techniques which make learning easier and more enjoyable. The following are some student guidelines for achieving good study habits:

1. Get enough sleep.
2. Come to class prepared with pencil, paper, and other necessary materials.
3. Be an active participant in class. Listen well and take part in class.
4. Ask questions to clarify problems.
5. Plan your day and schedule time for homework.
6. Use what is learned and apply it to new situations.
7. Strive to do the very best work possible. Just "getting by" is not a worthwhile goal.
8. Student planners should be utilized daily.

SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION

Suspension, the temporary prohibition of a student's attendance for no more than three school days, is within the jurisdiction of the school principal. Suspensions will be invoked for a sufficient reason. The student's parents or legal guardians will be notified by personal contact. Written documentation will be kept in the student's file.

Expulsion, the permanent termination of a student's enrollment, is ordinarily invoked only as a last resort. The principal will use every means available to discover the cause of the problem and may make a referral for professional counseling. Incident/s documentation leading to the expulsion of a student will be kept in the student's file.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY

The technology policy gives students and parents an understanding of the guidelines and code of conduct for the use of technology at St. Thomas the Apostle School. While we understand that the use of technology is important, we also see it as a privilege for our students. In the computer lab, or classrooms, computer/Chromebook/IPad users should expect that files stored on the computers and server will not always be private.

The school is not accountable for the accuracy and quality of internet information. Information is the responsibility of the user.

The following is not permitted:

- sending or display of offensive messages or pictures
- using obscene language
- harassing or insulting others
- damaging computers, IPads or computer systems
- violating copyright laws
- using other's passwords
- trespassing in other's folders and files
- intentionally wasting limited resources

Students in grades K-8 use programs that allow access to the Internet through bookmarked sites or supervised search. To gain access to the Internet, students must obtain parental permission and sign and return a form to the office. This form will be distributed to kindergarten and new students from the computer teacher. Once this form is signed, it is in effect for as long as the student is enrolled at St. Thomas the Apostle School. Families will receive a Student Chromebook Loan Agreement that will explain the responsibilities for the protection, use and care of the device. Any damage, if repairable, is the financial responsibility of the student. If repair of a damaged device is not possible, the student will be responsible for replacing the device.

TEXTBOOKS

Textbooks are furnished to the student by the school. Students are responsible for the covering of all books and are expected to properly care for the books issued to them. If a book is lost, misused or damaged beyond reasonable wear, the student will be billed to replace the book.

TUITION

Tuition for the school year is set by the St. Thomas the Apostle School Board and approved by the St. Thomas the Apostle Parish Finance Committee. Ordinarily, notification of these rates are communicated to parents in January or February. **All families must use the FACTS Tuition Management Program.**

PARISHIONERS

To receive parish sponsorship for the 2026-2027 school year, contributions by way of the envelopes need to be a minimum of $750.00 for the calendar year 2024.

OUT OF PARISH

For families from other parishes, lists will be sent to the pastors to identify those who will be eligible for tuition assistance. Only correspondence from the parishes will be used to reflect tuition reduction. People are encouraged to contact their pastors directly.

NON-AFFILIATED FAMILIES will be charged the total cost of education per child.

If you have any questions regarding your tuition, please call the parish business manager, Steve Coffey at (413)313-4318.

The standard tuition payment policy states:

1. The FACTS payment process divides the tuition bill into ten payments beginning in July through April of the following year.
2. No student may begin school in September or return after each marking period unless family tuition payments are current. Students in grade 8 will not be allowed to participate in end-of-year activities and graduation unless all the financial responsibilities have been met.
3. Should a child withdraw during the school year, a refund will be issued for those who have paid in advance.
4. Diocesan Financial Aid is available for any families who qualify. If you wish to inquire about this aid, please contact the business or school office.

VISITORS

All visitors are required to report to the school office upon entering the building. Visitors must sign in and visitor passes are to be worn. All visitors must state the intent of their visit, as well as their destination.

WEBSITE/FACEBOOK PAGE

Important school information and forms may be found on our school website: www.stthomasapostleschool.org.

St. Thomas the Apostle School uses Facebook to post classroom activities and events.

WELLNESS POLICY

For the health and wellness of others at school, students who have been out sick should not return to school until they are well and without fever for 24 hours.

RIGHT TO AMEND

Saint Thomas the Apostle School reserves the right to amend this handbook. Notice of amendments will be sent to parents when and if they occur.

PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK AGREEMENT

Please review the policies and regulations of this handbook. After parents/guardians and students have had an opportunity for review and discussion, it is required that this form be signed and returned to the school office.

The handbook agreement signature due date is Friday, September 18, 2026.

We have read and understand the policies in the St. Thomas the Apostle School Parent/Student Handbook.

Family Name: _____

ParentGuardian/Signature_____

Student Signature: _____

Student Signature: _____

Date:_____